

Appendix 13

Health Plus+ A Preventive Health Initiative

Considering the acute medical, mental health and social intervention needs of our students, DC Public Schools (DCPS), Office of School Health Programs (OSHP) established the Health Plus+ Initiative. The initiative was developed in collaboration with the Department of Health (DOH), Children's National Medical Center School Services Program, and several Medicaid Managed Care Organizations (MCOs).

Purpose

The purpose of the initiative is to facilitate the development of a unified preventive school- health and human service program that will improve the overall health and well being of students. Additionally, the initiative was established to connect students with a medical home so they can comply with District and Federal student health requirements.¹ Finally, the critical challenge of Health Plus+ is to coordinate a system that is capable of addressing the multiple physical /emotional and social intervention needs of students who live in poverty.²

School Health System Review – Development of Cooperative Agreements

During school years 2000-01 and 2001-02, a preliminary school health system review was conducted by the school nurses, DCPS OSHP and DOH. The purpose of the review was to determine health requirement compliance levels for all students –pre-school through the twelfth grade. The following school-health system domains were analyzed:

- Student health compliance;
- School health services;
- School health technology; and
- School health resources.

Each domain is addressed below.

Health Compliance

Approximately 80,000 student records were analyzed and nearly 34,000-40,000 students were missing one or more required immunization(s) and their physical examination. The majority of non-compliant students were in middle/junior and senior high schools.

Data from the immunization registry also suggested that a high percentage of students who were enrolled in Medicaid were not in compliance. Given this knowledge, cooperative agreements were established between DCPS and the following Managed Care Organizations (MCOs):

¹ In school year 2000, 55,000 students were out of compliance with the District's immunization requirements. According to the DOH's most recent compliance statistics, currently 2,100 students are out of compliance. This gives DCPS a 95% immunization compliance rate. It is one of the highest compliance rates for a school district in the nation.

² More than 90% of DCPS students qualify for the Student Free and Reduced Lunch Program.

(Prepared by the Office of School Health Programs, DCPS)

- Ameri Group;
- Chartered Health; and
- Health Right.

The purpose of the agreements is to connect students who are enrolled in Medicaid with their medical home so they may receive health services in order to comply with the student health requirements. The DOH Director, Chief Medicaid Administrator, Executive Directors for participating MCOs and Superintendent of DCPS signed the cooperative agreements.

As a result of the cooperative agreements, there has been an increase in immunization compliance rates for DC public school students who are enrolled in the Medicaid program³. However, findings from the review suggest that the following structures must be in place to increase the students' physical examination compliance rate:

- ❑ Improve coordination between the school nursing program and Medicaid;
- ❑ Increase health promotion for adolescent students;
- ❑ Amend DC Law 66 "Student Health Requirement Act". (The law was established before the enactment of the District's EPSDT program—therefore, the law's physical examination requirements are inconsistent with EPSDT's student health check-up schedule); and
- ❑ Increase service capacity for students with emotional and physical disabilities.

Other findings from the reviews indicated that a significant number of foreign-born students were without health insurance and a health care provider.⁴ In order to provide health services for uninsured students, the DCPS OSHP established a cooperative agreement with the Mary's Center that provided free immunizations and health screenings for students at 21 schools. Mary's Center also established a school-linked health program at Brightwood Elementary School.

Note: In addition to providing health care assistance to our foreign born students, Mary's Center is a Medicaid health care provider.

Health Services

The school nurses provide basic health services in DC public schools. However, findings from the review showed that the majority of school nurses are only in the schools for the required 20 hours a week. Considering the increasing number of school health conditions confronting students, data from the reviews suggested that additional school nursing hours are needed⁵. Additionally, findings indicated that supplemental nursing assistance is required at schools that have students with special health care needs. Therefore, in SY 2000-01 the OSHP and DCPS Chief Financial Office (CFO) established provisions that would allow the local schools to use their weighted student formula funds (WSF) to purchase additional school nursing hours from DOH.

Although the funding process is still in place, several schools had to drop out of the supplemental program because they lost students and funds which reduced their ability to use the WSF to pay for additional nursing coverage. Nursing coverage in the schools will remain an issue until full time nurses are placed in all schools.

³ Source: DOH Division of Immunization – Student Immunization Compliance Reports.

⁴ Source: DOH Division of Immunization

⁵ Source: School Nurses Utilization Reports; DC Asthma Coalition Reports; DOH Primary and Preventive Health Care Administration Reports;

Health Technology

According to results from the review, inadequate health information technology adversely affected school nurses' ability to track students' immunization compliance. It was recommended that DCPS health units be technically upgraded so that school nurses can have access to the DOH immunization registry.

Note: Although there are still problems with connectivity to the immunization registry, there have been major improvements with coordination and sharing of student data between DOH Immunization Division and DCPS Office of Information Technology. During the past 3 years, the DOH has received national acknowledgement and awards for the efficiency of information that is provided by the immunization registry.

Health Resources

Considering analyses from the school health system review, DCPS with the support of DOH and the school nursing program developed the Health Plus+ Initiative. As a result of the initiative, 20 cooperative agreements have been established. The agreements provided the following preventive and primary health services and support activities:

- Two school based health centers;
- Three school-linked clinical health programs;
- Free physical exams – including tuberculosis and lead screenings;
- Free dental services;
- Free eye glasses;
- Free psycho-social counseling; and
- HIV/AIDS testing and counseling

Additionally, cooperative agreements have been developed with local universities, and other private organizations to conduct clinical trial(s) and child find studies. These studies will help identify and treat diseases that affect DC public school students.

Finally, as a result of the Health Plus+ Initiative DCPS is developing partnerships that will improve students' health and their capacity to learn through support of families, schools, and communities.

Issues Related to Health Plus+ Initiative

During the initial phases of the initiative DCPS OSHP had problems getting services in the schools because of inefficient space, lack of regulatory standards, and clinical oversight for the school based health centers. Additionally, procedures for entering the schools were not clear for some organizations. The CNMC and DOH also expressed concerns about programs that required assistance from the school nurses. According to CNMC and DOH some Health Plus+ projects affect the school nursing program and their contract with DOH.

DCPS has reviewed the expressed concerns of the school nurses, DOH and community organizations regarding the implementation of the Health Plus+ Initiative. Regulations for the school nursing program need to be established. Additionally, DCPS will consider the issues that have been presented and will begin to make regulatory, organizational, and structural changes that will improve the initiative's coordination with other health services that may be offered by DOH and the school nursing program.